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SUBJECT: UNSC CONSULTATION ON LEBANON: UNSCR 1559

¶1. (U) This is an action message. Please see Paragraph 3.

¶2. (U) Mission may draw on the talking points at paragraph 3 for the October 30 Security Council consultation on the eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary General on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1559 (2004).

¶3. (SBU) Begin Talking Points:

-- We welcome the Secretary General's most recent report on UNSCR 1559.

-- We concur with the report's conclusion that the Lebanese government must continue extending its control throughout the country until it is the sole political and military authority. In this regard, we join the Secretary General in expressing our strong support for the National Dialogue process initiated by President Sleiman.

-- The election of President Sleiman was a major step forward for Lebanon. Under his leadership, the country has a great opportunity to move beyond the factionalism and violence that has characterized its recent history. At the same time, however, Lebanon faces great challenges and there is a continued, pressing need for full implementation of all provisions of UNSC resolution 1559. Today I would like to make four points.

-- First, the violence that erupted in Lebanon in May clearly demonstrates the fact that there has been virtually no progress over the past four years in implementing a core component of resolution 1559 - the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, the most significant of which is Hizballah.

-- As the Secretary General notes in his report: "The issue of Hizballah's weapons continues to be central to the political debate in Lebanon and to the Security Council's resolutions on Lebanon. Hizballah's maintenance of separate military assets and infrastructure is a fundamental challenge to the government's attempts to consolidate the sovereignty and authority of the Lebanese state..."

-- This point cannot be overemphasized, because any other progress Lebanon may make could unravel overnight if armed groups are able to continue to operate with impunity. The impact of these groups is profound enough that elections in Lebanon can not be described as "free and fair"; this will hold true as long as voters are intimidated by the threat of violence from armed groups like Hizballah - groups that have demonstrated a willingness to turn their arms against Lebanese civilians.

-- The international threat is also clear. As the report points out, "Hizballah's (para-military) structures, parallel and distinct from those of the state, remain a threat to regional peace and security." Additionally, the report notes

Hizballah continues to make verbal threats against Israel.

-- The United States joins the Secretary General in urging all parties with influence on Hizballah, particularly Syria and Iran, to support the group's transformation into a peaceful political party, not an armed militia, consistent with the requirements of Resolution 1559 and the Taif agreement.

-- Second, we are concerned that the Lebanese-Syrian border remains porous. The Secretary General's report repeats the conclusions of the recent report of the Lebanese-Syrian Border Assessment Team: the rate of progress for the Lebanese government's implementation of LIBAT recommendations has been insufficient. Improving this situation is a key task for the Lebanese government and we call on them to assess the need for international assistance.

-- The government of Syria also has clear responsibilities to ensure that illegal weapons do not cross its border into Lebanon in violation of UNSC Resolution 1701. Syria has the capacity and the know-how to interdict weapons flows and stop foreign fighters from entering Lebanon and must take steps to ensure cease the flow of weapons to Hizballah and other armed groups.

-- Third, the United States joins the Secretary General and the rest of the international community in applauding the recent agreement between Syria and Lebanon to establish full diplomatic relations. We look forward to implementation of the agreement before the end of this year.

-- That said, the texture of this new Lebanese-Syrian political relationship - and the extent to which it represents full Syrian respect for Lebanese sovereignty - will only be revealed once we see how Syria's relations with armed groups in Lebanon evolve, including whether Syria fully abides by the arms embargo established by UNSC Resolution 1701.

-- Finally, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's renewed efforts to bring about a diplomatic resolution to the Sheba'a Farms dispute, which should be addressed in conjunction with the issue of disarmament and all unimplemented portions of resolutions 1559 and 1701.

-- We also support UNIFIL's efforts to bring about a solution to the continued presence of Israeli troops and civilians north of the "blue line" in the village of Ghajar.

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